



SOCIAL SECURITY INFORMATION CENTER
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STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY: WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

1983 Social Security Fix Didn't Do The Trick: "I really appreciated the spirit in 1983 of President Reagan and Speaker O'Neill and others who said, we got a problem with Social Security, let's come together and fix it. That's the kind of spirit that I'm confident will prevail eventually here in Washington. By the way, this is the 22nd anniversary of the 75-year fix on Social Security. In other words, at the time they said, we got us a 75-year fix. The problem is, 22 years later we're now talking about, let's make it permanent this time. And so, when Congress debates these issues, it's really important to make sure that we have a permanent fix, that we get it done once and for all." (President George W. Bush, Remarks On Strengthening Social Security, 4/21/05) [Read The President's Remarks.](#)

President Bush Says Voluntary Personal Accounts Essential To Reform: "[Social Security reform is] not going to pass without a personal savings account. A plan with personal savings accounts would bring the Social Security system into the modern era. Social Security worked for a long time. There is fewer people paying in the system now. A lot of us are getting ready to retire. We have to think about modernizing the system. I want Social Security to exist and continue to exist. I want it to reflect the 21st century." (President George W. Bush, CNBC's "Kudlow & Company," 4/19/05) [Read The Transcript.](#)

Secretary Snow: 'We Need Lasting, Meaningful Reform:' "Social Security has been patched up in the past. We've raised taxes to take us through a few more generations of retirees. But the patches don't last because our demographics are working increasingly against us. We need lasting, meaningful reform. Part of lasting reform ought to be this option, for younger workers, to build a nest egg and I'm excited to be talking with this group about how to make that opportunity a reality in a fiscally responsible way that will not unsettle our financial markets." (Treasury Secretary John Snow, Remarks To Bond Market Association, 4/20/05) [Read The Secretary's Remarks.](#)

President Clinton Spoke About Reform ... In 1998: "If you don't do anything [to reform the system]," said Clinton, in a 1998 speech at Georgetown University, "one of two things will happen. Either it will go broke and you won't ever get it or, if we wait too long to fix it, the burden on society of taking our generation's Social Security obligations will lower your income and lower your ability to take care of your children." Clinton's saying it does not make it true, but it is true, given that by 2018 the money from the payroll tax will be insufficient to pay benefits. AARP and others have misled Americans with the fiction that a so-called trust fund will then take care of our problems. There is no trust fund." (Jay Ambrose, "Bush Pays Price For Good Deed," *The Providence Journal*, 4/20/05) [Read The Column.](#)

7 Out Of 10 Students Fear They Will Not Receive Benefits: "When asked about Social Security, seven out of 10 students fear there will be no benefits left when they retire; 52 percent favor changing the system to allow Social Security taxes to be invested in private accounts, while 46 percent favor investing contributions in the stock market, though 53 percent want Congress to provide guarantees for the future." (Jennifer Harper, "Student Bush Backers Outnumber Critics," *The Washington Times*, 4/20/05) [Read The Article.](#)

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Secretary Chao In Florida – Strengthen Social Security Now: "Our country must do something and we've got to do it now," she said. Chao and other Cabinet members are on the road as part of the Bush administration's '60 Stops

in 60 Days Tour' to build the case for a Social Security overhaul. She found a receptive audience in members of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce, who gave her a standing ovation after her luncheon speech at the Renaissance Vinoy Resort's Sunset Ballroom. The case Chao made is familiar to anyone who follows the Social Security debate. An aging population means fewer workers will be available to support each retiree. In 2017, Social Security benefits will exceed the taxes collected and in 2041, the Social Security Trust Fund will not have enough money to pay promised benefits. 'The government is making promises it cannot keep,' she said." (Helen Huntley, "Labor secretary pitches Bush Social Security plan," *The St. Petersburg Times*, 4/20/05) [Read The Article.](#)

Personal Accounts Will Help Younger, African American Workers: Blacks are disadvantaged further by Social Security because most have few dollars to invest in their own 401(k) or IRA plans. Once payroll taxes are deducted and the necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and transportation are met, there is often little money left to fund a retirement plan. Not surprisingly, 38 percent of black retirees rely solely on Social Security for their income. Under President Bush's plan to restructure Social Security, all of the nation's younger workers, regardless of race or sex, would have the option to divert a portion of their 12.4 percent mandatory payroll tax deduction to a personal retirement account they control and own. (Herman Cain, "Separate Water Fountains," *townhall.com*, 4/20/05) [Read The Column.](#)

Secretary Snow – We Must Seek Wisdom Of Seniors To Strengthen Social Security: "As a member of the President's Cabinet and a Trustee of the Social Security Trust Fund, I assure you that you will see no changes to your benefits. But just because your benefits won't change doesn't mean you have nothing at stake in Social Security reform. In fact, Social Security involves things that are vitally important to you: the well-being of your children and grandchildren. The President has laid out the principles which should guide responsible reform and he is asking our generation for help. America's seniors must be involved in helping to strengthen and save Social Security for future generations. President Bush welcomes the wisdom of seniors and he wants our input. The reality is that the system will not be there for our children and grandchildren if action is not taken soon." (Sec. John Snow, "Strengthening Social Security for our Children And Grandchildren," *SeniorJournal.com*, 4/16/05) [Read The Column.](#)

Rove – Social Security 'A Big, Important Problem:' "Yes, look, this is a big, important problem. And we committed, within this first 60-day phase, working with the leadership in Congress, to draw attention to the fact that it is a problem worthy of action by Congress now. I would remind you that not too long ago, there were a great many people -- in fact there are still people today who say it's not a problem. Let's not worry about it. Let's leave it around for our kids and our grandkids to solve. And that's not the attitude that we should have. It's a large problem. Unfunded obligations in Social Security are \$12 trillion. In 2008, the payments into the Social Security system will peak, and the Social Security surplus peaks. In 2017, we start spending more money each year than we're taking in. And by 2041, about the time that our kids and our grandkids get set to retire, the system goes bankrupt." (White House Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor Karl Rove, CNN's "Inside Politics," 4/18/05) [Read The Transcript.](#)

Secretary Jackson – African Americans Have Most To Gain From Strengthening Social Security: "An individual who owns his retirement security -- a concept central to the president's plan for reforming Social Security -- would enjoy many of the same benefits homeownership provides. And under the plan, even the lowest-income workers would have the opportunity to build equity. Black Americans have the most to gain from the proposals. As it stands today, black seniors are disproportionately more dependent on Social Security, but they receive less benefit from the system. While approximately 20% of white Americans depend entirely on Social Security for their retirement income, the figure doubles for blacks." (Sec. Alphonso Jackson, "It Really Is Black And White...", *The Wall Street Journal*, 4/19/05) [Read The Column.](#)

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